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VERSES

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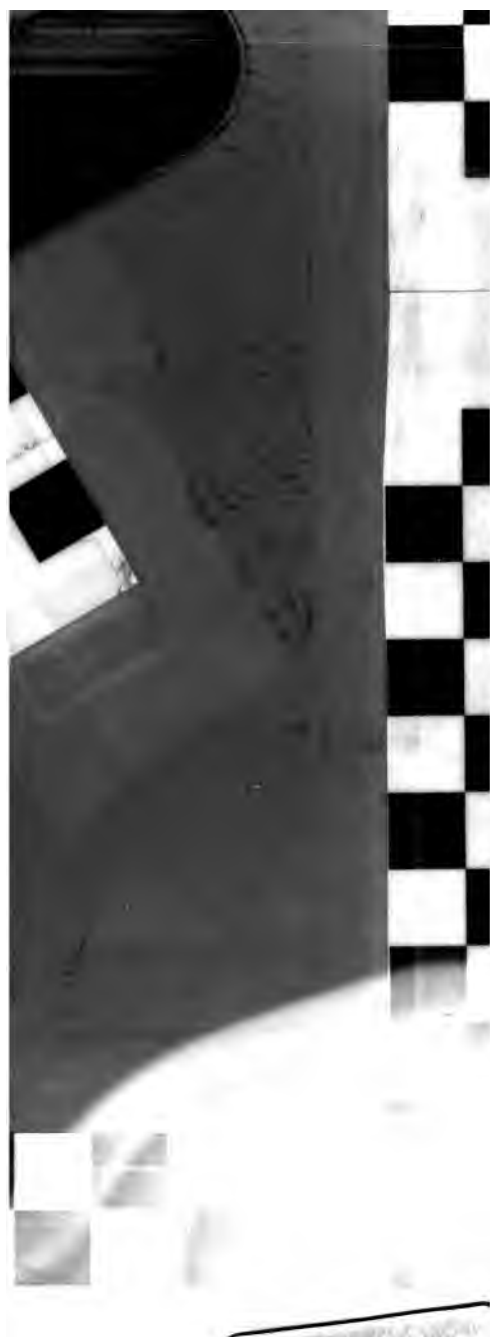
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# V E R S E S



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## VERSES.


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### “Dissolving Views.”

STRANGE fancies these that cheat mine eye—  
City, and stream, and tower ;  
They “come like shadows—so depart”—  
What wizard rules the hour ?

His magic wand calls up to view  
Shapes from remotest earth,  
Which melt in chaos but to give  
Some wilder vision birth.

The fierce red sun is quenched at noon,  
In the pale moon’s watery gleam ;  
And coming and receding forms  
Are blent as in a dream.



---



The mountain's sides are rife with spears,  
Where late the olive grew ;  
And battle's banner from the sky  
Blots out the peaceful blue.

Where brightly blazed the happy hearth,  
Now burns the beacon fire ;  
And the castle-keep, where thunders sleep,  
Frowns out the village spire.

Alas ! there is no magic here ;  
Nor aught that holds not true  
Of sternest life, whose every day  
Hath its Dissolving View.

The orange flower that decks the bride  
Doth droop as soon as braided ;  
And the tears are flush on Pleasure's cheek,  
Ere her wreath of smiles hath faded.

And they who high and happy were,  
The envied of the morn,  
Have gnashed their teeth, and cursed, at eve,  
The hour when they were born.

To-morrow's sun may see in chains  
The despot of to-day :  
And the miser heaps the gold that fleets  
On swallows' wings away.




What is the fairest hope of earth ?  
 A rainbow born of tears—  
 A blossom cherished but to show  
 What bitter fruit it bears.

Thus ever, to our wondering eye,  
 Rise scenes of mingled hue,  
 Till the "dark valley's" mists obscure  
 Life's last Dissolving View.

---

### The Past and the Future.

ALAS! alas! we cannot call on Time  
 To open his sealed graves, and render up  
 The buried hearts and hopes whose memories cling  
 About us like a spell, and haunt our dreams;  
 But there is One Who can give back those hearts  
 In purer shrines than perishable clay;  
 And, for the withered flowers of Hope bestow  
 The amaranths that have their bloom in Heaven.



### The Warning Voice.

My youth had glad and golden hours; but those were  
few and fleet,  
For I was early called to quit my boyhood's blest  
retreat;  
And so, with not a friend to cheer or counsel me, was  
thrown  
Amid the herd of Mammon's slaves—and found myself  
alone!

I in the path of letters toiled—that path so thickly  
spread  
With roses; ah, the thorns are felt by those who up  
it tread!  
The bitter pangs of "hope deferred" were mine in the  
pursuit;  
And long I trimmed and pruned the vine, while others  
plucked the fruit.



But cheerly, now, my vessel glides : the quicksand and  
the shoal  
Are past, and wreck-denouncing waves no more around  
her roll ;  
The clouds, that o'er her early course cast doubt and  
gloom, are gone ;  
And winds, that then adversely blew, now bear me  
bravely on !

My cottage hath a blazing hearth, my board hath ample  
fare,  
And healthful cheeks, and beaming eyes, and merry  
hearts are there ;  
Their mother's smile is yet as sweet as when, at first,  
it told  
She prized a fond and faithful heart above the world-  
ling's gold.

And yet a sad and solemn thought intrudes upon my  
bliss :  
Lord ! what am I, that mine should be such happiness  
as this ?  
Why, while around, on every hand, far worthier ones  
I see  
Condemned to tread life's sterile wastes, bloom flowers  
like these for me ?

"Wherefore?" a Spirit answers me: "Thine early  
hopes were marred [hard ;  
In mercy to thy perilled soul, and still thy heart was  
Then He Who laid thy burthen on withdrew His chas-  
tening rod,  
And sought, by gentle means, to win the sinner to his  
God.

"But, O ! He will not always strive ! Then, ere the  
day be spent,  
And night—a long dread night—steal on, repent, vain  
man, repent !  
Lest, when the vineyard's Lord shall come, and still no  
fruit be found,  
He say, 'Cut down this barren tree ! why cumbereth  
it the ground ?' "

---

### *The Vanity of Grief.*



How vain a thing is grief ! our sighs, we find,  
Are sorry counter-gusts when Fate's keen wind  
Blows in our teeth ; and tears, though fast they roll,  
Will never float our ship from off the shoal.

“ Let Him Alone.”

“ LET him alone ! ” a doom more dread  
Ne’er thundered from Thy throne ;  
O not alone ! O not alone !  
Lord, leave me not alone !

O not alone ! though softly down  
The stream my bark shall glide ;  
No tempest whispered in the sky,  
Nor ripple on the tide ;

Lest I forget Thy prisoned winds  
That suddenly o’erwhelm ;  
While Wisdom sleeps upon her watch,  
And Passion takes the helm.



O not alone ! when this pale brow  
Low sinks, by sorrow bowed ;  
And troubles, o'er my darkening path,  
Come thickening like a cloud.

O not alone ! for while Thy hand  
My faith shall keep in view,  
I will not dread e'en Satan's wiles,  
Nor fear what man can do.

---

### Truisms.

WHAT is Beauty ?—a frail flower :  
What is Fame ?—an empty breath :  
What is the longest life ?—an hour,  
That hath but one thing certain—Death

## Cæcilia.

THERE is a pleasant legend of a king,  
Who, ere the diadem enwreathed his brow—  
Nay, ere the purple even tinged his dreams,—  
Was wont to seek a fountain that gushed forth,  
In a lone grotto, by the Lake of Nemi ;  
Where, from the Naiad Genius of the place,  
He gathered words of wisdom, counsels rare,  
With which, returning to the bustling world,  
He won the wonder of his fellow-men ;  
And, with the golden precepts of the nymph,  
Paved a bright pathway to the throne. And when,  
The prize obtained, he ruled in infant Rome,  
She followed on his steps, and in a grot,  
Hard by the walls, did meet him as of yore,  
And, with her wonted counsels, taught him there  
Wisely to wield the sceptre he had won :  
Which seals forsooth the dogma of the Sage,  
“ Who seeketh Wisdom, him will Wisdom seek.”  
’T is said—and who will marvel at the tale ?—  
That, out of this sweet communing, did spring,



Between th' immortal and the child of clay,  
A love as deep, as passionless, and pure  
As the fresh fountain of their place of tryst.  
Did he, with the bodily eye, behold  
His spiritual love ? or was her form  
But imaged forth by Fancy, whose rare art  
Doth cast the sculptor's craft into the shade ?  
Did those sage counsels fall from palpable lips,  
Or came they, with sweet mystery, to his ear  
In the articulate murmurs of the fount ?  
The tale is wild and vague, yet passing sweet,  
And redolent of pleasant thought to him  
That hath his own Egeria—some fair shrine  
To which, when sick and weary of the world,  
Bowed by its griefs, or smarting from its stings,  
He flees for comfort and for counsel—she,  
The Lady of his grotto, scarce less pure  
Than she of old, and bound to him withal  
By kinder, closer sympathies than link  
Mortality with Essence—like her type,  
Free from the thrall of passions wild and stern,  
Those hungry wolves that dog the steps of man.  
And O, the magic of her low sweet voice !  
Stillling the storm-lashed waters of his soul  
Into an infant's murmur. Her bright smile  
Beams like the dawn of Hope upon his heart,  
And he wends forth again into the world,  
Made wise by her unselfish wisdom.



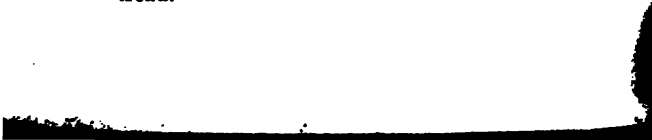
## My Mother's Grave.

A PRODIGAL'S LAMENT.

"But the grave of those we loved, what a place for meditation!"—SKETCH BOOK.

My mother's grave! my mother's grave! what bitter  
thought it brings!  
And yet unto that bitter thought how fond affection  
clings!  
Though since I saw thy resting-place long years have  
passed away,  
It seemeth to my aching heart a scene of yesterday.

I stood beside the hillock green—the sun was sinking  
fast,  
And, from the rudely sculptured stone, a lengthened  
shade was cast;  
And O, to my prophetic eye, that shadow seemed to  
spread  
Along the rugged path in life my feet were doomed to  
tread.



O ! I have wept for follies done, and deeds of darker dye,  
To be committed o'er again ere yet those tears were dry :  
I've wept o'er many a hope deferred ; and then, the  
    boon obtained,  
Have mourned more bitterly the cost at which the prize  
    was gained.

I've mourned the broken faith of those who smiled  
    but to betray ;  
But more the blind fatuity that made my heart their  
    prey :  
Yet ne'er, for aught I've lost or done, though sad the  
    thought may be,  
My spirit grieves so bitterly as when I think of thee.

And well itself to deepest grief my spirit may resign,  
And sorrow for my destiny, but surely not for thine :  
It were a happier fate for thee that death thine eyes  
    should close,  
Than thou hadst lived to look upon my folly and my  
    woes.

Thou knew'st me but in childhood's day, when, if too  
    wild and free,  
Thy voice would check my wayward steps and charm  
    me back to thee :  
Thy heart had broken with that charm, for O, what  
    earthly power  
Could stay my mad and headlong course in manhood's  
    fiercer hour ?



I have been passion's passive tool—a seared leaf on its  
 tide,  
 And borne, upon its rapid course, from peace and virtue  
 wide :  
 Now whirling on some eddy's verge, now tossed upon  
 the wave,  
 An idle, varying, restless thing, of every gust the slave.

I would not thou hadst lived to see my madness and  
 my shame ;  
 To sorrow o'er my ruined hopes and early blighted  
 fame ;  
 To see thy first-born thus resigned to guilt's remorseful  
 stings,  
 Of whom thy pure and trusting heart had augured holier  
 things.

O, hear me, Thou Whose words of might the raging  
 waves control,  
 And save me from that vortex dread, the maelstrom of  
 the soul !  
 A fearful doom, yet such, alas ! each child of passion  
 finds.  
 Who, launching on Life's ocean, spreads his feelings to  
 the winds.



### The Victim Bride.

I saw her in her summer bower; and, O! upon  
my sight,  
Methought, there never beamed a form more beautiful  
and bright!  
So young, so fair, she seemed as one of those aerial-  
things  
That live but in the poet's high and wild imaginings;  
Or like those shapes we meet in dreams, from which  
we wake, to weep  
That earth hath no creation like the figments of our  
sleep!

Her parent—did he love his child o'er all life's other  
things?  
As traders love the merchandise from which their profit  
springs!  
Old age came by, with tottering step, and, for the  
sordid gold  
With which the dotard urged his suit, the maiden's  
peace was sold;  
And (for her father's iron heart was proof against  
her prayer),  
The hand he ne'er had gained from love, he won from  
her despair.

I saw them through the churchyard pass ;—may such  
a nuptial train,  
Slow moving by the silent graves, ne'er grieve my  
sight again !

The bridemaids—each one beautiful as Eve in Eden's  
bowers—

Shed bitter tears upon the path they should have strewn  
with flowers ;

Till seemed that young and white-robed band the  
funeral array

Of one whom God unto His rest had early called away.

The priest—he saw the bridal group before the altar  
stand,

And sighed, as he drew forth the book with slow  
reluctant hand :

He saw the bride's flower-wreathèd hair, and marked  
her streaming eyes,

And it seemed less like a Christian rite than a pagan  
sacrifice ;

And, when his trembling voice went up for blessing on  
the pair,

Faith, in his saddened spirit, brought no answer to the  
prayer.

There stood the palsied bridegroom, in youth's gay  
ensigns drest—

A shroud were fitter raiment far for him than bridal  
vest !

I watched him when the ring was claimed—'t was hard  
to loose his hold ;—  
He held it with a miser's clutch—it was his darling  
*gold!*  
His shrivelled hand was wet with tears she shed, alas!  
in vain,  
And it trembled like an autumn leaf beneath the  
beating rain!

I've seen her since that dreadful morn—her golden  
fetters rest,  
Even as the weight of Incubus, upon her aching breast:  
And, in his welcomed day, when Death shall deal his  
gentler blow,  
Her pale cheek will not yield a rose to wreathe the  
victor's brow ;  
Her once bright eye is lustreless, and bowed her  
fragile form,  
And she longeth for the bridal that will wed her to  
the worm.

---

### The Loving Heart.

THE loving heart hath neither bolt nor bar ;  
Distress e'er finds the door upon the jar.

**To my Daughter,**

ON HER BIRTHDAY.

Now joy to thee, my daughter ! and may all thy coming  
years  
Be like the last that thou hast passed, as little stained  
by tears ;  
May Hope walk by thy side, my love, and ever on thy  
brow  
The smile that speaks a happy heart beam sunnily  
as now.

My daughter ! I remember when they brought thee to  
the bed  
From which I never thought again to raise my aching  
head ;  
Thy infant smile it wrung my heart, and I inly prayed  
that He  
Would spare me but a little space, that I might live  
for thee.

---



And, O! the keener anguish still, when fever's burning  
hand  
Was on thy cheek, and death appeared beside the  
couch to stand ;  
In that sad hour, forgetting all but thee, I breathe  
the wild  
Rash prayer of Israel's King, that I had died for thee  
my child !

Yes; thou hast been to me the source of anxious hope  
and fears ;  
Of many a thrilling joy, my love, and many bitter tears  
But, O! of all I've borne and done for thee, I desire  
but light,  
While thou art spared, in health and hope, to bless thy  
father's sight.

My daughter! when the frost of age is white upon  
my brow,  
And the pulse that now is full and strong, shall feebly  
beat and slow ;  
When the day's far spent, and nearer comes the  
inevitable night,  
And life's receding vision fast is fading from my  
sight ;

, wilt thou stay my failing steps as I falter to the  
bourn, [return ;  
hence travellers who journey there do never more  
I wilt thou smooth the pillow then, from which thy  
father's head  
I'll ne'er again be lifted but to find a colder bed ?


be not sad, my daughter ! let not sorrow's tears  
bedim [to Him  
young bright eye, but be it raised in fervent prayer  
that we may live as those who hope, when life's wild  
storms are o'er,  
meet in that safe Haven where are joys for evermore.

---

### The Lily of the Valley.

In the world's proud eye  
I care not to flaunt ;  
A snug nook in the vale  
Is my lowly haunt.

While the tempest's flash  
Scathes the mountain flowers,  
All I feel of the storm  
Is the wealth of its showers.



---


### Written in the Album of a Stranger.

WHAT shall I write, fair lady, who hast thrown  
This bright book open to so poor a pen?  
How sing to one—unknowing and unknown—  
Her hopes, joys, sorrows, all beyond my ken?

The world, with all its blandishments and bane,  
Is it to thee a path untried and new?  
And hast thou yet to prove its friendships vain—  
The false how many, and how scant the true.

And hath thy life been one unbroken chain  
Of blessedness, bright golden links the hours?  
Hast journeyed blithely over hill and plain,  
And found no mildew on the wayside flowers?

Or is there on thy heart grief's early blight?  
Do loved, but lost ones, tearful thoughts awaken,  
And only visit thee in dreams, made bright  
By radiance from their angel pinions shaken?



Hast thou found memory a dreaded thing,  
In much that it calls up again to view—  
A sea, by zephyrs stirred to storms that fling  
Hope's ancient wrecks upon the heart anew?

Lady, I know not—'tis not mine to know—  
Thy thoughts, nor do I seek to break their seal;  
But may thy cup—whether of joy or woe—  
Be blessed to thy spiritual weal.

---

### A Prayer.

LORD! I have bowed with fervour at the shrine  
Of Beauty, Fame, and Friendship; but at Thine  
How coldly have I bent the formal knee,  
The while my truant heart was far from Thee.

But do Thou aid my weakness with the strength  
Of Thy sufficient Spirit; till, at length,  
I burst my bonds, and from its throne is hurled  
The worshipped Dagon of my heart—the World.

**" I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."**

God of my strength ! when fly the moments fleetest,  
 And that wise charmer, Pleasure's voice is sweetest ;  
 When round my feet the Tempter's snare is stealing,  
 Say to my soul—Thy Love and Grace revealing—  
 " Strong in My might, fear not his power to shake—  
                   thee,  
 For I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

When life's wild waste is bare and bleak before me,  
 And troubles, like a flood, come surging o'er me,  
 And on my path the wrathful clouds are scowling ;  
 Lord ! let me hear, above the tempest's howling,  
 Thy words, " Fear not, though darkest storms o'ertake—  
                   thee,  
 For I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

When, from my darkening vision, earth recedeth,  
 And most " Thy rod and staff" my spirit needeth—  
 In that dread hour, God of all comfort ! hear me,  
 And, in the " still small voice," when death is near me,  
 Speak, " Fear not thou, when the last trump shall wake  
                   thee,  
 For I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

## The Portrait.

AND this is Eleanour ! There is the brow ;  
 But where the light of intellect that cast  
 A halo round it ? There the eye ; but where  
 The glance that kindled worship, or the flash  
 That scathed presumption ? There the lip ; but where  
 The tones which silence fed on, and which sank  
 Into the deep well of the heart, and stirred  
 Its hidden fountains ? There, too, is the cheek ;  
 But 'tis the same, as yesterday, to-day :  
 Its hue is fixed, and answereth not to Joy,  
 Or Hope, or Love, or Grief, which on the cheek  
 Of its most fair Original are wont  
 To write their characters as in a book.  
 But shall we blame the limner that the hand  
 That wields Apelles' pencil, may not grasp  
 Prometheus' torch. No !—'tis a glorious craft  
 That doth bring back the distant, and dispute  
 The absolute dominion of the grave.  
 Yes ! though the lineaments of those we love,  
 Or, haply, having loved, now mourn, be traced  
 Upon the heart indelible, the eye  
 Delights to gaze on the "familiar face,"  
 Albeit through the mist of many tears.

## Alpine Flowers.

SLIGHT not, with careless eye,  
This gentian bright and blue ;  
Reflecting ether's dye,  
'Mid Alpine snows it grew.

No cloud above it spread,  
Unfathomed space to dim ;  
It looked up, from its bleak bed,  
Like the eye of Faith, to Him

Who, in the cold rude blast,  
To its bosom breathed no blight ;  
But round its dwelling cast  
Rays of intensest light :


So to us, in Sorrow's hour,  
Would a brighter peace be given,  
If, like this simple flower,  
Our hearts were nearer Heaven.



### A Village Scene.

How calm, how still, how beautiful !  
In such a scene as this  
Did glide, alas ! too rapidly,  
My boyhood's hours of bliss :  
There is the tree I oft have sought  
For shelter or for shade ;  
Where I have watched the moon's pale beam  
As through the leaves it played ;  
And there too is the village well,  
By lichens overgrown,  
Wherein the lingering schoolboy oft  
Drops, fathoms deep, the stone ;  
And listens, half afraid, half pleased,  
To that mysterious sound,  
Which, like a spirit's voice, comes up  
From out the dark profound.

There is the sheet of water, too,  
Its margin graced with trees ;  
Where I full many a tiny bark  
Have trusted to the breeze ;  
While on the brink I've stood and watched  
As anxiously its fate  
As though my every hope had been  
That mimic vessel's freight.






My ships were light and fragile things ;  
Yet, in my riper day,  
I've ventured higher hopes, alas !  
In barks as frail as they ;  
But winds and waves conspired those bold  
Ambitious thoughts to check ;  
And, when I sought an argosy,  
I gazed upon a wreck.

---

### Sonnet,

ON THE BIRTH OF THE PRINCE OF WALES.

HARK ! from afar the cannon's booming sound  
Proclaims the birth of Britain's kingly boy ;  
Winds waft the news, and Faction's din is drowned  
In the loud pæans of a people's joy—  
Joy to the loftiest, as the lowliest lot,  
The lordly palace, and the peasant's cot.  
True to herself, despite of discords vain,  
Is England still, as in the days bygone :  
Strike but a link of the electric chain,  
And, heart and hand, the many are as one :  
Admire, ye nations ! and, admiring, learn  
A lesson speaking with a trumpet's blast ;  
Pointing, the while, for confirmation stern,  
To that mute monitor, the awful PAST.



### On a Vase,

BROKEN ON THE EVE OF A SEASON OF AFFLICTION.

THAT treasured vase ! for many a year  
It graced our guarded hearth ;  
'Twas hard to think so fair a thing  
Was fashioned of base earth.

How like our cup of happiness  
That to the brim was filled !  
But it is broken, and the rich  
Bright wine of life is spilled.

And it is ever thus, let Hope  
Beguile us as she may ;  
For joy, it will not long abide  
In vessels made of clay.

---

### An Epitaph.

HIS morn was rich in promise—bright with flowers ;  
Noon's burning zenith saw him Passion's slave ;  
With Eve came, health-fraught, Penitence' late showers ;  
And Night fell softly on a Christian's grave.

---

## The Dying Pastor.

O, LET me feel the blessed breeze ! 'tis fresh upon me  
now,  
As wafted 'twere by angels' wings to fan my fainting  
brow !  
And, hark ! the bell—its cadence comes, how richly !  
on the air,  
To call my flock—another's now—unto the House of  
Prayer.  
O, though my spirit yearns to God, my voice is weak to  
pray,  
For my sun of life is going down while even yet 'tis day.

Lord ! pardon me the weak regret, if fondly still my  
feet  
Do linger on the path of life ; for fair and passing sweet  
Is many a flower that decketh it, and many a love-  
linked chain  
Doth bind its folds about my heart to make the part-  
ing pain :  
Witness the tears from loving eyes, and the bitter wail  
of one—  
“ O, would that I had died for thee, O Absalom,  
my son ! ”



God pardon my presumptuous sins—the worse than  
idle schemes

Of usefulness, that ended, e'en as they began, in dreams;  
Forgive the unconsidered word, in jest or anger spoken,  
The vows so oft and rashly breathed, alas! but to  
be broken :

The heart of clay is strong to will, but, O, how weak  
to do !

Its best resolves, “the morning cloud, and as the  
early dew.”

But in our weakness, gracious Lord ! Thy strength is  
perfect made,

And not unto regardless ears went forth my cry for aid ;

What time my soul to darker far than Egypt's bonds  
was sold,

Thou heard'st my prayer, long-suffering God ! Whose  
mercies are of old ;

For “Christ hath triumphed,”\* and His blood hath  
paid the ransom full ;

And though my sins were crimson red, He maketh  
them as wool.

That old grey Church, that ivied tower—another's  
voice is there—

God's Grace be on the preacher's tongue, His blessing  
on the prayer !

\* His own words.

The bell, so silent now, will, ere another Sabbath be,  
Wake from its solemn sleep, to beat with slower pulse  
for me:  
But, ah! to die is gain, O God! Who art so strong  
to save,  
If that Sabbath's sun shall shine upon a ransomed  
sinner's grave.

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### *The Fall of the Leaf.*

THE moaning winds the forest sweep ;  
Its lingering leaves are few ;  
And o'er their fall'n companions weep  
Their tears of silent dew.  
Those crystal drops—how vainly shed !—  
So weep the living o'er the dead.









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